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## Eoko

Ole Pere

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## EOKO

I would never have thought I would come this far  
Before telling you that I am Ole Kores  
The legs of whose beautiful heifers are branded  
As they move on the green landscape

There goes Maroroi with the spotted ochre colour  
Then that ox of mine that is dressed in blue  
Who takes a quick flight up the high country of Ole Polos  
Where we, the brave sons of Ole Dikir live  
Whose cattle are used to paddock grazing

Is that it or is it another?  
My selected herd whose settlement is crowded  
Let us decorate those for whom the morning  
Will not find as they lie in high country  
Where the elders' gums are red as they harvest flour

Are they the ones over there or are they not?  
I know it is they the red heifers with brown ears  
Though they have not been smeared with ochre  
Ones that are well suited with patches  
And whose hearts are too soft to permit them to delay

Are they the ones there or are they not?  
Yes those are my unbranded oxen with buffalo-like horns  
Of which the majority are glittering grey  
As they march through Olerai unable to carry two humps

Are those others mine or are they others?  
Indeed they are the mighty oxen of Meirurae  
Whose bells echo through a dense forest  
As they are accompanied by the heifer with milk aplenty  
And with mighty horns obtained from a country that I dare not say.

Are those others mine or are they not?  
I know they are the ones all of the same colour  
Looking like the Kanga cloths as they ascend  
The country of cool air  
And where my patterned ox stretches his legs

Are those over there mine too, or are they not?  
I know they are a part of our army with loud bells  
From a country where devastation is not permitted  
And from where the Lumbua comes carrying a bag  
Of money for those of Mwangi's that have not been sold

EXPLANATION This is a poem that is half sung and half spoken and is known as Eoko in Maa. It is spoken (or sung) by men, mainly warriors (ilmurran), to relate their accomplishments. They are normally highly poetic and rhythmic. Note the repetitions and the imagery. Ole Pere, the composer, is from the Purko section of the Narok district. This Eoko was recorded at his home in 1976. Naomi Kipury, Oral Literature of the Maasai (Nairobi, Kenya, Heinemann Educational Books (E.A.) Ltd 1983), 226-227.

OPPOSITE PAGE: THE FEELING (DETAIL)

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